

High Point: good relations between government & and the business community

And exceptional leadership characterized by “can-do” attitudes

*Excerpts from a High Point Enterprise editorial
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High Point should build on its strengths.

That's advice gleaned from a marketing plan delivered to High Point leaders last week by The Sanford Holshouser Business Development Group of Raleigh.

The presentation was made in conjunction with the release of the High Point Economic Development Corp.'s annual report, which listed 133 business announcements made during 2003. Most of those involved local companies expanding their operations. Others represented new startups or relocations to High Point.

High Point has significant strengths that position it well to support business growth and to attract new businesses, according to the Sanford Holshouser assessment.

These assets include location, meaning proximity to major markets and access to transportation networks; available land; the Piedmont Centre business park; the International Home Furnishings Market; good relations between government and the business community; and, significantly, exceptional leadership characterized by can-do attitudes.

These and other factors add up to a conducive business climate, which both nurtures companies already here and appeals to those looking to escape from less business-friendly environments. Often, firms learn of these qualities on their own, but a good marketing plan communicates this information effectively to businesses that don't know yet that they'd rather be in High Point. The Sanford Holshouser report offers strategies for conveying the message and also suggests that economic developers make greater use of industry leaders already here who can share their experiences with others.

They also list key opportunities: to recruit headquarters and distribution centers of international furniture companies; to capitalize on the planned FedEx air-cargo hub, which will become "a regional economic engine," putting High Point in a "strategic location to take advantage of it"; to lay out another business park like Piedmont Centre; to further promote retail tourism through furniture shopping; and to assist entrepreneurial small business growth.

The report recommends creating a "downtown development zone," making use of incentives to encourage growth, and notes, "The proposal to put the railroad tracks in a tunnel to create street-level space could be an opportunity" to spur new business activity there.

Like covering the railroad tracks, many of the ideas presented by Sanford Holshouser already have surfaced locally. But it's good to hear an outside opinion that High Point is capable of making them happen. The city is positioned well for continued growth and economic development. But it must form sensible plans and apply its assets effectively in order to get results.

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